

SANDY SPRINGS
GEORGIA
POLICE DEPARTMENT

General Order 04-4120

Vehicle Operations

Operations

Issued: 4/16/2012

I. Policy

Officers who engage in vehicle pursuits and other emergency vehicle operation must continually balance the need to pursue against all known or apparent risks posed to the general public, the officer, and in some circumstances, the suspect. In all vehicle operation, employees shall exercise reasonable caution, prudence and due regard for the rights and safety of others.

II. Purpose

This Order establishes rules and procedures regarding pursuit driving, emergency response driving and other vehicle operation in order to assure that all police vehicle operation is consistent with the motto "protect and serve."

III. Discussion

A. In General

1. The Department is committed to promoting public safety. Some instances of police pursuit and emergency response driving are necessary and unavoidable but no assignment is of such importance, and no task is to be expedited with such emphasis, that principles of safety become secondary. There is no act of such magnitude that it justifies disregard for the welfare of innocent persons.
2. Vehicle pursuits and emergency response driving are inherently high risk activities and officers must exercise discretion very carefully during such episodes. This discretion involves the consideration of complex and sometimes unpredictable factors which may continually change, requiring a continued assessment of the risks involved.

B. Routine Patrol and Normal Vehicle Operation

1. Officers shall operate police vehicles in accordance with the normal rules of the road except in the very narrowly defined situations identified in this Order. Even when permitted to operate outside the normal rules of the road, officers shall drive reasonably and responsibly. Reckless and careless driving is prohibited.
2. All employees shall wear their safety belts at all times while in City vehicles, unless an emergency situation demands otherwise.
3. Officers will not routinely conduct traffic stops outside the jurisdiction of the City of

Sandy Springs.

4. Whenever any large truck/vehicle/vehicle with trailer is operated in reverse mode (backing) and visibility of the driver is limited in any manner, a spotter/guide should be used to direct the movements of the vehicle, even if the vehicle is equipped with electronic equipment to assist in backing.

IV. Response Driving

A. Emergency Response Driving

1. When responding to emergency situations, including the overtaking run which will in some cases precede a direct pursuit, officers shall operate their vehicles in accordance with state laws pertaining to emergency driving and the guiding principles of this Order, and shall ensure that their MDVR is recording.
2. In deciding the extent to which it may be reasonable to deviate from the normal rules of the road in emergency response driving, the officer shall consider such factors as:
 - a. Type and condition of the vehicle being operated;
 - b. Type and condition of the roadway to be traveled upon and the officer's familiarity with the area;
 - c. Obstacles, both present and potential, that must be avoided (e.g., foreign objects on the roadway, construction, standing water, etc.);
 - d. Experience and training of the officer in high speed vehicle operation;
 - e. Nature of the offense and the circumstances known concerning the call;
 - f. Time of day, traffic conditions and presence of pedestrians;
 - g. Visibility and illumination available to the operator in the area being traveled;
 - and h. Existing weather conditions and roadway surfaces.
3. In response to what the officer reasonably believes is an emergency involving a serious crime and/or the imminent threat of death or serious injury, the officer may exceed the speed limit so long as doing so does not endanger life or property, as follows:
 - a. The officer shall not exceed twenty-five (25) miles per hour over the posted speed limit when operating on non-controlled access roadways. On controlled-access roadways like interstate highways and other freeways, the officer shall not exceed thirty-five (35) miles per hour over the posted speed limit. However, there may be an exception to the speed cap or limit in the event of response to an emergency in which there is probable cause to believe that human life is currently directly endangered, as in the case of an active shooter in a school or an 'officer down' call;
 - b. Officers may proceed through intersections contrary to traffic signs and signals

if they have made absolutely certain that they can do so safely;

- c. The officer will not, under any circumstances, drive at speeds that are unreasonable given existing driving conditions. The aforementioned caps or limits on response driving speeds shall not be interpreted as license to drive that fast. There may be circumstances (e.g., ice, traffic or pedestrian density, etc.), in which it would be unreasonable to drive even at the posted speed limit.
4. Whenever an officer is operating a vehicle outside the normal rules of the road, the officer must use blue lights and siren. If the siren would warn of the officer's approach, (e.g., aid in a criminal's escape, bank alarm), the siren may be disengaged upon approaching the audible range of the incident location but in that event the officer shall slow to normal rules of the road, including speed limits.
5. Officers shall not attempt to escort other emergency vehicles or private vehicles on an emergency run. Assistance may be given by blocking dangerous intersections to aid in the movement of such vehicles.
6. For further guidelines on communications during response to routine and emergency calls, as well as authorized use of emergency equipment, see the Law Enforcement Communications Policy.

V. Vehicle Pursuit

A. Justification

1. Vehicle pursuits may be initiated only when danger to the public created by the pursuit is less than the imminent or potential danger to the public should the suspect remain at large. Officers shall not assume an operator or passenger is involved in something more serious just because he or she is fleeing but must rely on the totality of the circumstances known at the time he or she decides to pursue a fleeing vehicle, which shall be included in a written report. The goal of any pursuit is the safe apprehension of the suspect without inappropriate danger to the public.
2. In deciding whether to initiate or continue a pursuit, officers shall consider all circumstances affecting public and officer safety, including:
 - a. The type of offense (the more serious or dangerous the crime, the greater the consideration to pursue);
 - b. The number of police vehicles in the pursuit;
 - c. The safety of the public;
 - d. Volume, type, speed and direction of vehicular traffic;
 - e. Time of day and weather conditions and visibility;
 - f. Road conditions, construction, poor repair, blind curves, narrow roads;

- g. Population density and volume of pedestrian and vehicle traffic;
 - h. Speed, mental condition, possible impairment of violator;
 - i. Hazardous maneuvers (e.g., driving against on-coming traffic, running through red lights or stop signs) by the violator; and/or
 - j. Minors or hostages in fleeing vehicle;
 - k. The officer's own driving skills and familiarity with the roads;
 - l. Condition and capabilities of his or her police vehicle; and
 - m. The officer's knowledge, training, and experience.
3. The Controlling Supervisor and officers engaged in a vehicle pursuit are required to continually evaluate the totality of the circumstances justifying the pursuit. If at any time the circumstances change or evolve to a point where the pursuit is no longer justified, the officer and/or Supervisor must terminate the pursuit.

B. General Rules and Guidelines

The following will generally apply to all Department vehicle pursuits:

1. Only marked cars utilizing blue lights and siren, may continue the pursuit of fleeing suspects;
2. Vehicles that are not equipped with and utilizing blue lights, siren and radios shall not initiate or participate in pursuits;
3. Only the Primary Unit, Secondary Unit and Controlling Supervisor may be engaged in a vehicle pursuit at any given time;
4. No other officers or units will participate in pursuit or pursuit related activities without specific unit authorization clearly granted via radio transmission by the Controlling Supervisor;
5. The Controlling Supervisor may grant permission for additional units beyond those listed above to engage in a vehicle pursuit only in extraordinary circumstances to increase overall safety;
6. All officers and Supervisors engaged in a vehicle pursuit and equipped with MDVR shall ensure that the MDVR is recording for the complete duration of the event;
7. Officers shall not proceed through intersections contrary to traffic signs and signals until they have made absolutely certain that they can do so safely.

C. Vehicle Pursuits Specifically Prohibited

Officers shall not engage in a pursuit under any of the following specific conditions:

1. When the pursuing officer has reason to believe that the suspect is a juvenile under

the age of sixteen (16) and does not present an imminent threat to life;

2. When it is possible for the pursuing officer to identify and apprehend the suspect at a later time, and the suspect does not present an imminent threat to life;
3. When the pursuit involves motorcycles, unless the officer reasonably believes that the suspect is, or has, engaged in violent conduct with the apparent intent to cause death or serious injury to members of the public;
4. When the initial violation is a misdemeanor, or City ordinance violation and there is no indication the violator is a serious, imminent threat to the public;
5. When the pursuing officer's vehicle cannot be safely operated at pursuit speed;
6. When an officer is transporting ride-alongs, non-sworn personnel, or prisoner(s);
7. When the pursuit requires driving the wrong way on a one way street or freeway.

D. Primary Unit Pursuit Procedures

1. Except as specifically ordered by a Supervisor, responsibility for the decision to participate in a pursuit rests with the individual officer, but that decision must be in accordance with this Order.
2. Officers initiating or engaging in a pursuit shall notify Communications immediately that a pursuit is in progress. The officer shall provide Communications with the following information:
 - a. Unit number;
 - b. Offense or reason for the pursuit;
 - c. Location and direction of travel;
 - d. Descriptions of vehicle and occupants;
 - e. Any exigent or unusual circumstances such as but not limited to: children in the pursued vehicle, suspect traveling the wrong way on a divided highway, occupants displaying/using weapons, etc.
3. The Primary Unit shall communicate updated conditions and actions as they occur until a Secondary Unit becomes engaged in the pursuit.
4. The Primary Unit is responsible for listening to radio communications, correcting any miscommunication, complying with any directives, continually weighing the decision to continue the pursuit and acknowledging any termination notice.
5. The Primary Unit shall maintain a safe interval or reactionary gap behind the fleeing vehicle, enough as to insure that the police vehicle can be brought to a safe stop, without collision, should the suspect vehicle stop abruptly. 6. In the case of a two (2) person police unit, the officer riding as the passenger will handle the radio communications.

E. Secondary Unit Pursuit Procedures

1. Unless directed otherwise by a Supervisor, a second police unit, (designated Secondary Unit), may join in pursuit of the fleeing vehicle. Once in visual range of the Primary Unit, the officer shall provide Communications with the unit number and location and direction of travel.
2. The Secondary Unit will then assume radio communications and be responsible for updating conditions and actions as they occur.
3. The Secondary Unit shall maintain a safe interval or reactionary gap behind the Primary Unit and/or fleeing vehicle, enough as to absolutely insure that the police vehicle can be brought to a safe stop, without collision, should the suspect vehicle stop abruptly.

F. Assisting & Uncommitted Units

1. Upon becoming aware of a pursuit, Uncommitted Units in the area may move towards the vicinity of the pursuit, but must remain in their assigned area unless specifically authorized by their Supervisor and shall operate their vehicle in accordance with the ordinary rules of the road.
2. Uncommitted Units should remain aware of the direction and progress of the pursuit, but should not actively participate.
3. At no time shall Assisting Units and/or Uncommitted Units drive outside the normal rules of the road to drive in caravan with a pursuit or drive parallel to a pursuit.

G. Supervisor Responsibilities and Procedures

1. Upon notification that a pursuit has been initiated, all units should keep the radio channel clear while the Controlling Supervisor ascertains all the necessary information from the Primary Unit in order to determine if the pursuit will be allowed to continue.
2. Upon notification of pursuit, the Controlling Supervisor, who may be any sworn Department Supervisor, shall:
 - a. Promptly acknowledge by radio, take command of the pursuit, ensure compliance with this Order, and immediately terminate pursuits not authorized under this Order;
 - b. Remain in the Controlling Supervisor position until the pursuit is terminated, or is relieved by a higher authority;
 - c. Continually weigh all objective risk factors in permitting a pursuit to continue;
 - d. Carefully consider whether the need to apprehend the suspect has been fully weighed against the dangers created by the pursuit;
 - e. Proceed to the termination point of the pursuit if the violator's vehicle stops;

- f. Coordinate any available support, such as Canine support or Aerial support.
3. Should a Supervisor initiate a pursuit and be the only available Supervisor, he or she must direct that another marked patrol unit(s) take over the Primary or Secondary Unit responsibilities immediately, as practicable. If no other marked vehicles are available and no other Supervisor is available to be the Controlling Supervisor, the lone Supervisor engaged in the pursuit must weigh this factor into determination of whether or not to continue the pursuit and respond accordingly.

H. Unmarked Police Vehicle

1. An unmarked police vehicle will not participate in a vehicular pursuit unless it is equipped with an emergency blue lights and siren. The unmarked vehicle shall relinquish Primary Unit status upon the participation of a marked vehicle when it is safe to do so.
2. The unmarked unit may continue as a Secondary Unit until another marked patrol unit is available. When it is safe to do so, the marked patrol unit will take over Secondary Unit responsibilities. The unmarked vehicle will then immediately discontinue the pursuit.
3. The officer operating the unmarked vehicle, the Primary Unit officer and the Controlling Supervisor must take into consideration the additional risk factors involved in their continuing the pursuit with unmarked vehicles involved.

I. Special Purpose Vehicles

1. The following special purpose vehicles shall not become involved in pursuits:
 - a. Yamaha Rhino;
 - b. Law Enforcement Bicycles;
 - c. Prisoner Transport Van;
 - d. Crime Scene Vehicle;
 - e. Evidence Unit;
 - f. Support Division Pick-Up Truck; and
 - g. Critical Incident Vehicles.
2. Marked SUVs, motorcycles, and canine team vehicles will only become involved in a vehicle pursuit under the most extreme circumstances and then only with prior supervisory approval. Should a marked SUV, motorcycle, and/or canine team vehicle officer initiate a pursuit, he or she will relinquish Primary Unit status immediately upon the participation of a marked regular vehicle, at which time the special purpose vehicle officer shall immediately abandon the pursuit completely. After abandoning the pursuit, the special purpose vehicle officer may proceed to the termination point in a non-emergency mode, adhering to the normal rules of the road.

J. Aerial Support

1. Aerial support may be requested at the discretion of the Controlling Supervisor.
2. When the aircraft has advised that the suspect vehicle is in view, the Controlling Supervisor shall direct that the pursuing units discontinue close pursuit. Primary and Secondary Units must then decrease speed and add additional distance for the purpose of increasing safety. Units may close this distance for the purpose of taking suspect(s) into custody if officers reasonably believe that the pursuit is about to terminate.

K. Termination of Vehicle Pursuits

1. Termination of a pursuit shall be ordered by the Primary Unit, Controlling Supervisor, or a higher authority at any time the pursuit cannot be conducted safely within the parameters of this Order. Any officer with relevant information regarding pursuit dangers shall promptly report such facts to the Controlling Supervisor.
2. Any decision to terminate must be reported to Communications for broadcast to all units.
3. An officer who is ordered to terminate a pursuit must immediately do so, immediately return to the ordinary rules of the road and discontinue any efforts to follow after the suspect vehicle.

L. Forced Termination Techniques

1. In some pursuits involving extreme, life threatening emergencies, immediate action must be taken to terminate a subject's flight by roadblocks, stop sticks, or the PIT Maneuver. Such action may be taken only with the express prior authorization from the Controlling Supervisor and only when the involved officers have received formal training in such techniques.
2. Accountability for authorization of such actions rests with the Controlling Supervisor in charge of the pursuit and decisions regarding them shall be made in conformity with the guiding principles of this Order.
3. Ramming, stationary roadblocks, and other forced vehicle stops may be deadly force, depending on the likelihood that serious injury will be inflicted. In such actions, officers shall comply with Department policy regarding use of force.
4. Positioning moving pursuit vehicles to deter or channel a fleeing suspect is not deadly force and is allowed in compliance with this policy, but must not create an undue risk of collision unless deadly force is authorized.
5. Supervisors and officers considering using moving roadblocks shall at all times, balance the need for the roadblock against the potential dangers to the suspect and public of using the roadblock. Road conditions, traffic, intersections, terrain and other such factors should be considered before establishing a roadblock. A moving roadblock is appropriate when it reasonably appears that there is imminent danger to

life and property if the vehicle is not stopped at the earliest possible time. Officers using a moving roadblock should always exercise due regard for the safety of others and the roadblock should be discontinued if it creates or becomes an unreasonable risk of injury to others. Officers operating vehicles involved in a moving roadblock will use blue lights and siren at all times.

6. Only a Controlling Supervisor or higher authority may authorize a stationary roadblock and then only as a last resort when it reasonably appears to the Supervisor that the action can be taken in reasonable safety and is likely to result in the apprehension of the suspect.
7. Officers shall follow the procedures for forced terminations as outlined in Departmental training. The PIT Maneuver may not be used at speeds over forty (40) mph unless deadly force is authorized and then only at locations where it is reasonable to expect that the maneuver can be safely accomplished in respect to innocent persons nearby and officers.

M. Inter-Jurisdictional Pursuits

1. In the event another law enforcement agency engaged in a pursuit within the Sandy Springs city limits requests assistance from the Department, Communications shall first determine the reason for the pursuit and the number of vehicles involved in the pursuit. The Communications Unit shall then notify the respective District Commander or designee who will become the Department Controlling Supervisor.
2. The Controlling Supervisor shall be responsible for determining whether the Department will assist in the pursuit. The Controlling Supervisor shall be responsible for determining the type of assistance, if any, which will be provided by our Department, given the philosophies and principles of this Order. In no event will officers of the Department continue their involvement in the pursuit beyond their territorial jurisdiction, unless specifically authorized to do so by the Controlling Supervisor.
3. The Primary, Secondary, and Controlling Units are permitted to continue an authorized pursuit of a motor vehicle until the pursuit is ordered terminated or is taken over by officers from another jurisdiction.
4. Uncommitted Units are not permitted to leave the City's jurisdiction to assist in pursuit or pursuit related activities.
5. Officers shall terminate pursuit when radio communications are no longer clear, unless extreme, exigent circumstances exist to continue the pursuit.
6. As necessary, the Controlling Supervisor shall inform Communications to request assistance from another agency with territorial jurisdiction.
7. Officers shall not continue a vehicle pursuit into another state.

N. Pursuit Reporting and Critique Procedures - Officer Responsibilities

1. The Primary Unit is responsible for the completion of the Incident Report, in addition to any other required reports or documentation.
2. All Units, (committed and uncommitted), shall download their MDVR recording of the pursuit as soon as reasonably possible.
3. All other Units involved in the pursuit will complete a supplemental report documenting their involvement in the pursuit.
4. This documentation will be used in review and critique of the pursuit.

VI. Assignment and Usage of Department Vehicles

A. Requirements for Vehicle Operation & Assignment

1. Only Department employees may operate Department vehicles. They must hold, at minimum, a valid State of Georgia class "C" operator's license and will be trained to operate said vehicle through POST training, the DTO, or assigned special training.
2. All employees shall use the occupant safety restraint device when operating a Department vehicle. The restraint device is placed in every Department vehicle. Employees shall adhere to the driver responsibilities articulated in the City Employee Manual.

B. Authorized Use of Vehicle

1. Authorized use of the city vehicle includes:
 - a. The performance of law enforcement duties;
 - b. When on official travel status between place of business and place of temporary lodging;
 - c. When on official travel status and not within reasonable walking distance between either of the above places;
 - d. Obtaining meals;
 - e. Obtaining medical assistance, including drugstores;
 - f. Transport of consultants, contractors, or commercial firm representatives when in direct interest of the City of Sandy Springs, and within the scope of employment;
 - g. Transport of materials, supplies, equipment, parcels, baggage or other items belonging to or serving the interest of the City of Sandy Springs;
 - h. Transport of any person or item in an emergency situation within the scope of employment duties;
 - i. Commute between place of dispatch or place of performance of official business to personal residence when specifically authorized by provisions

stipulated herein;

- j. "De Minimus" personal use such as lunch or an occasional stop for a personal errand on the way between a business delivery location and the employee's home that would extend the normal commute no more than what would be considered reasonable and not constitute an additional unapproved trip or travel; and,
 - k. Transport of officers, officials, employees, clients, or ride-alongs of the City of Sandy Springs, in the performance of an authorized task in the normal performance of duties.
2. At the discretion of the Chief of Police, the transport of families, friends, associates or other persons who are non-employees of the City of Sandy Springs, may be authorized by the Chief of Police for special events outside the scope of the normal performance of duties, such as city functions, parades, or representation for the city, (e.g., funeral, or other similar events). When this occurs, the Chief of Police or designee will designate the transporting vehicle as being "out of service." When a vehicle is "out of service," that officer will not respond to calls for service and that transporting vehicle will not be operated under emergency circumstances.

C. Unauthorized Use of Vehicle

Unauthorized use of the city vehicle includes:

1. Travel or task performance of a personal nature, depending upon the assigned vehicle restriction, except for commuting and "de minimus" personal use, not connected with the accomplishment of official business;
2. Travel or task performance beyond the stated capabilities of the vehicle;
3. Transport of families, friends, associates or other persons who are non-employees of the City of Sandy Springs, unless specifically authorized by the Chief of Police;
4. Transport of hitchhikers, except in the case of law enforcement duties;
5. Transport of items or cargo having no relation to the conduct of official business;
6. Transport of acids, explosives, weapons, gasoline, ammunition or highly flammable materials except in an emergency police situation, or performance of an authorized task as instructed by a Supervisor;
7. Transport of any item, equipment or cargo projecting from the side, front or rear of the vehicle in such a manner as to constitute a hazard to safe driving;
8. Extending the length of dispatch beyond that required to complete the official business purpose of the trip;
9. Transportation between place of residence and place of employment, other than as specified in the policy;

10. Outings, except for planned official City of Sandy Springs activities;
11. Loan of vehicle for use in non-city authorized functions;
12. Unless approved by the Chief of Police, no one other than a City employee, who is defined as operating within the scope of their employment, is permitted to drive the City vehicle; and
13. Any other occurrence which could be construed as being unreasonable given the constraints defined herein.

VII. **No Idling**

The purpose of this section is to establish guidelines to eliminate the unnecessary idling of Sandy Springs Police Department vehicles and other rolling stock as part of an ongoing effort to reduce fuel consumption and reduce the department's environmental footprint. This document will clarify our policy to reduce fuel consumption and describe departmental relationships, responsibilities and participation in the No Idling Policy.

- A. Appropriate use of department vehicles includes the following:
 1. Vehicles will not be parked with the engine operating for more than 30 seconds unless it is essential to the performance of work.
 2. Initial "warm up" idling should be minimized. If a vehicle's windows are clear, driving should be started after no more than 30 seconds of idling.
 3. Initial "warm up" for diesel vehicles should be limited to 3-5 minutes, or as otherwise recommended by vehicle's manufacturer.
 4. If a vehicle is going to be stopped for more than 30 seconds, except as required while operating the vehicle in routine traffic, the engine should be turned off as idling for more than ten seconds uses more fuel than it takes to restart the vehicle.
- B. Exceptions - Due to the diverse nature of the department's vehicle fleet, exceptions are needed to this No Idling Policy. Subsequently the provisions of the policy do not apply to:
 1. Emergency vehicles, such as public safety vehicles, while engaged in operational activities;
 2. Vehicles that are required to idle in order to power ancillary equipment mounted on the vehicle without risking damage to the battery;
 3. Public safety vehicles performing emergency operations, but only when the vehicle must be operating for the warning devices or emergency systems to function;
 4. Vehicles equipped with temperature sensitive equipment;
 5. Public safety vehicles transporting prisoners, victims, or witnesses, or when performing traffic control;

6. The primary propulsion engine of a motor vehicle providing a power source necessary for mechanical operation of equipment required for job performance;
7. A motor vehicle forced to remain motionless because of traffic conditions over which the operator has no control;
8. The primary engine of a motor vehicle being operated for maintenance or diagnostic purposes;
9. The primary engine of a motor vehicle when necessary to operate defrosters, heaters, air conditioners or other equipment to prevent a safety or health emergency, but not solely for the comfort of the driver or passengers.

Issuing Authority: Chief of Police